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Subject: Carolina Journal: Rabon Calls for Legislative Probe of Pipeline Deal

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By: Rick Henderson

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The last week of March could be a busy one for the Cooper administration.

In a press release issued Wednesday, March 7, Sen. Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick, who chairs the Senate Rules Committee, called on legislative leaders to open a formal investigation of the controversial side deal Gov. Roy Cooper worked out with operators of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Rabon asked Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, and House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, to convene the hearing at the next meeting of the Joint Legislative Commission on Government Operations. That group typically meets the fourth week of each month. Rabon cited a report aired Saturday, March 3, on WRAL News in Raleigh in which Cooper adviser Ken Eudy discussed a \$57.8-million discretionary fund the governor arranged with the pipeline operators that would have been handled outside the normal legislative process.

Carolina Journal has reported extensively on the fund. (Find stories at this link.) *CJ* was the first media outlet in the state to question the unusual nature of the deal and has made a series of requests for all related records to the governor's office. To date, the only records *CJ* has received are the drafts of the Mitigation Memorandum of Understanding between Cooper and the ACP which were posted by WRAL.

General Assembly members also have asked for records, with little success, Rabon said.

"It is outrageous that the Cooper administration was selectively providing public records related to the governor's pipeline scandal to a single news outlet while refusing to provide the same records to the legislature," said Rabon. "The WRAL report proves that Roy Cooper had his hand in the cookie jar and intentionally steered money out of the state treasury and into a personal 'slush fund' he could dole out at his whim."

Rabon also noted that the General Assembly has the authority to compel testimony and issue subpoenas for public and private records if N.C. public agencies refuse to cooperate with records requests.